



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on Communications and Digital

House of Lords

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Dear Ms Minshall,

Thank you for giving oral evidence to the Communications and Digital Committee on behalf of Twitter as part of our inquiry into freedom of expression online. Thank you too for the written evidence you provided after the session. I am writing to ask two further questions.

President Trump and Ayatollah Khamenei

Twitter has said that its decision to ban President Trump was based on tweets on 8 January in which he said that those who voted for him “will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!” and “I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th.” Twitter judged that these infringed its ‘glorification of violence policy’.

Ayatollah Khamenei has not been banned from Twitter. However, last year he tweeted “We will support and assist any nation or any group anywhere who opposes and fights the Zionist regime, and we do not hesitate to say this.” and “The only remedy until the removal of the Zionist regime is firm, armed resistance.” You suggested that Twitter considered such tweets “sabre rattling”. Since the evidence session, the Ayatollah has also used Twitter to describe jihadi groups as “valuable”. Whereas, before he was banned, some of Mr Trump’s tweets were marked as being in violation of Twitter’s policy – but left available on grounds of public interest – no such message was applied to these tweets by the Ayatollah.

Please could you explain further why Twitter considered that Mr Trump’s tweets glorified violence whereas the Ayatollah’s did not?

We are seeking to come to a view on the consistency of Twitter’s decision making rather than passing judgement on individual decisions.

World leader policy

You told us that Twitter is reviewing its policy on world leaders’ tweets. Please could you provide an update on this and the likely timescale of the project?

We look forward to receiving your answers.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Gilbert of Panteg
Chair of the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee